

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 05747 271540Z

53

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2434

INFO USCINCSO

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CONFIDENTIAL BUENOS AIRES 5747

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ASEC, AR

SUBJECT: CONTINUING MILITARY CRISIS: SITREP NO. 2

1. MRS. PERON'S DECISION ANNOUNCED LATE YESTERDAY THAT AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SHE REFUSED TO ACCEPT RESIGNATION OF NUMA LAPLANE TOUCHED OFF PERIOD OF INTENSE MANEUVERING LATE EVENING AUGUST 26.

2. MILITARY FACTION LED BY CORPS COMMANDERS WHO WANT LAPLANE OUSTED INFORMED KEY LABOR LEADERS THAT ISSUE WAS STRICTLY INTERNAL MILITARY PROBLEM. THEY REPORTEDLY INFORMED LABOR LEADERS THAT WHEN LOPEZ REGA HAD ASKED ARMY TO INTERVENE IN LABOR/GOVERNMENT CONFRONTATION, MILITARY HAD TAKEN POSITION MATTER WAS ONE FOR CIVILIANS TO RESOLVE AND HAD STOOD ASIDE. IN PRESENT CRISIS MILITARY NOW WANTED LABOR TO TAKE SIMILAR ATTITUDE WITH RESPECT TO CORPS COMMANDERS' DISPUTE WITH LAPLANE. REPORTEDLY, LABOR LEADERS REPLIED THAT AS LONG AS ISSUE DID NOT TOUCH ON CIVILIAN INSTITUTIONS THEY WOULD ALLOW ARMY TO SOLVE INTERNAL DIFFERENCES IN OWN WAY. THUS, NOTHING CAME OF CGT MEETING LAST NIGHT.

3. PERONIST BLOC IN CONGRESS CALLED INTO "PERMANENT SESSION" LATE AUGUST 26 AND SEEMED TO HAVE ARRIVED AT SAME CONCLUSION AS CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 05747 271540Z

HAD LABOR LEADERS, I.E., AS LONG AS MATTER REMAINED MILITARY

AFFAIR, PERONISTS WOULD STAND ASIDE. THE MULTI-PARTY MEETING CALLED TO DRAFT A JOINT ANTI-GOLPISTA STATEMENT PROVED TO BE A FAILURE WHEN UCR AND FEDERAL PARTY REPRESENTATIVES, AMONG OTHERS, FAILED TO ATTEND. RICARDO BALBIN, UCR LEADER, REFERRED TO ONGOING ISSUE AS ONE OF ARMY TRYING TO SOLVE "THORNY" INTERNAL MATTER AND HE WENT ON TO PRAISE MILITARY FOR ITS STRICT ADHERENCE TO CONSTITUTIONALISM.

4. WITH DAMASCO'S RESIGNATION AS COLONEL AND MILITARY'S CLEAR DEFINITION OF CRISIS AS INTERNAL AFFAIR, POSSIBILITY CONFRONTATION BETWEEN MILITARY AND MRS. PERON CAN BE FINESSED. THEY ARE, IN EFFECT, PLACING ONUS ON NUMA LAPLANE RATHER THAN ON MRS. PERON, SAYING THAT HE RPT HE MUST EXPLAIN TO HER THAT HE NO LONGER HAS CONFIDENCE OF ARMY AND THEREFORE CANNOT POSSIBLY SERVE AS CINC. THIS IS ALL WELL AND GOOD PROVIDED HE AGREES TO AGAIN RESIGN AND SHE CHANGES MIND AND ACCEPTS RESIGNATION. FAILURE TO DO SO, HOWEVER, WILL LEAVE HER IN NOSE-TO-NOSE CONFRONTATION WITH ARMED FORCES. AND IN SUCH A SITUATION, IT IS NOT CLEAR AT ALL AT THIS POINT HOW MUCH SUPPORT, APART FROM HARD-CORE VERTICALISTAS, MRS. PERON COULD MUSTER TO HER SIDE. ON THEIR SIDE, MILITARY APPEAR TO BE PREPARED AS LAST RESORT TO ASK MRS. PERON AS WELL AS LAPLANE TO STEP DOWN.

5. COMMENT: IF MRS. PERON WISHES TO DEFUSE CRISIS, WAY IS OPEN TO HER TO ACCEPT LAPLANE'S RESIGNATION. MANY IN ANTI-VERTICALISTA FACTION OF PERONIST PARTY, HOWEVER, FEAR THAT MRS. PERON, EGGED ON BY LOPEZ REGA IN MADRID, WANTS TO FORCE MILITARY TO OUST HER--PREFERRING TO GO THAT WAY RATHER THAN BEING FORCED OUT BY CONGRESS OR HER OWN PARTY AT SOME LATER DATE. EMBASSY HAS NO INFORMATION TO CONFIRM THAT THIS IS MRS. PERON'S GAME PLAN. HOWEVER, IN PRESENT CRISI SHE HAS SO FAR BEHAVED AS IF IT MIGHT BE.

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